

Steal This Hook!

Dungeoneering Dilemmas

By Doug Beyer



Cut off from sunlight, surrounded by uncaring granite, hunted by darkvision-possessing horrors -- nothing else makes an **Eberron** adventurer feel more alive. Today's edition of Steal This Hook! has a theme of *dungeoneering dilemmas* and presents several adventure hooks designed to get your dungeon-bound heroes making tough decisions, and fast. Enjoy.

In the Swing of Things

The PCs chase a hobgoblin thief through the depths of an unstable Darguun silver-mine shaft. During the chase, the thief triggers an explosion, then swings across an immeasurably deep underground chasm on a rope swing. As the heroes run toward the chasm and rope swing, the mine tunnel collapses behind them. They have to stop at the chasm's edge and swing one-by-one across the gulf -- but, with the number of party members equaling N , the collapsing tunnel will reach them in $N-1$ rounds. It'll take quick thinking to figure a way to get everyone safely across -- especially when the hobgoblin begins loading his crossbow with rope-cutting bolts . . .



A Gnomish Quandary

Wintertime has come early to Zilargo's Howling Peaks this year, but that doesn't prevent the heroes from descending into a glittering frozen cavern near the top of Mount Indiro. The two young House Sivils gnomes, Diomayr and Julba, aren't going to rescue themselves -- and the heroes agree with their House Sivils guide that all signs point to this icy cave as their destination. When the heroes find evidence that the missing gnomes seem to be captives of a resident frost giant, they may be none too happy. When the heroes find further evidence that the frost giant is actually working for the *gnomes*, they may wonder what the heck is going on. In addition, their guide sniffs the air and declares the tunnel to be the lair of a group of svirfneblin, who normally shun such chilly environs. The missing Sivils youths must be in cahoots with both the svirfneblin and the frost giant, and the expedition to locate them may be a trap. Do the heroes press on and learn the truth of this new mystery, or retreat and reassess? Or is it too late to back out, now that the frost giant's cavern is full of their scent?



Hazardous-Environment Robot

The venomous spiders of a cavern called Chittering Deepes have claimed the lives of many adventurers hoping to find its rumored treasure. The Deepes was once a jewel mine, long-since stripped of its gemstones but rumored to

be the home of a wealthy night hag who loots the bodies of the spiders' victims. The PCs find one particularly harsh chamber whose floor is covered in chittering arachnids. Hung on the wall at the near side of the chamber, in easy reach of the heroes, is a golden wand. At the other side of the chamber, set in the wall 20 feet up, is the exit -- barred with iron -- and, on a short pedestal, a motionless warforged wearing a golden collar.

Experimentation reveals that the wand controls the movements of the warforged, and that with a little practice, the PCs can force the warforged to march around the spider-infested chamber, fetch a ladder to the exit tunnel, unlock the iron grating, and lower a boardwalk for the PCs to walk across. However, while the warforged is moving around the chamber, the spiders bite him mercilessly and painfully. Will the PCs use the night hag's handy warforged slave to help them across the room? Or will they find some other way to brave the chamber, and perhaps release the warforged from its painful servitude?

The Pit and the Psion

In the village overlooking Breland's horrible Black Pit (*Eberron Campaign Setting*, page 150), a halfling by the name of Crenshi is reading minds. Crenshi's purpose is to find travelers who are wealthy enough to fund his expedition down into that shadowy pit, fit enough to help him fight the dangers found there, and foolhardy -- or suggestible -- enough to allow him to perform a ceremony to his god, Khyber, the Dragon Below. Since he sees the heroes as just the candidates he requires, the psion Crenshi, along with his brutish hired-hand Olak, encourage the PCs to join resources with him so that they can rent an airship, fly it into the Black Pit's depths, and retrieve a miraculous lost artifact. Crenshi promises mountains of gold from the sale of this artifact to a buyer he has already lined up, and he just needs the PCs to agree to the split . . .

Mini-Hooks

Try these mini-hooks to get your players sitting on the edge of their seats.

- While the PCs hunt dragonshard smugglers in the caverns of the Shadow Marches, a worried father hires them to find his missing daughter -- but the daughter is one of the smugglers.
 - An ogre mage takes residence in the sewers under Sharn and starts befriending all sorts of criminal characters -- is she more of a threat to Sharn's citizens, or to the crime-bosses of the Sharn underworld?
 - A journalist from the *Korranberg Chronicle* wants an exclusive "ride-along" with the heroic adventurers as they brave an undead-infested dungeon.
 - A xorn swallows a precious dragonshard in its muddy chasm lair -- do the PCs attack the xorn and risk damaging the dragonshard?
 - The PCs dive to the undersea caves near the Lhazaar Principalities using magic *water breathing* paraphernalia -- but the rare artifact they discover emits a disruptive *antimagic field*.
 - A principled young Valenar elf swears that an Undying councilor told him to find his destiny in the caves under a Q'barra ruin -- and he needs the heroes to help him.
 - The money's good, but will the adventurers accept the offer to explore the dungeon that is haunted by living *stinking cloud* spells?
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About the Author

Doug Beyer spent a lot of time getting philosophy degrees until he figured out that he should just move to Seattle and become a web developer for Wizards of the Coast. Now he spends his days working on games and his evenings playing them. Doug uses the time normally allotted for sleeping to lurk on the Wizards.com message boards as his alter ego, WotC_Doog.

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